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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8697
INFO RUEHTA/AMEMBASSY ASTANA 0014
RUEHDM/AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS 0141
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA 1078
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 8079
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU 6271
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 2289
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 2951

S E C R E T COLOMBO 000888

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STATE FOR SCA/INS, USPACOM FOR FPA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/13/2017
TAGS: [IAEA](#) [KNNP](#) [PREL](#) [KZ](#) [SY](#) [AORC](#) [CE](#)
SUBJECT: PREPARING FOR GC VOTE ON MESA GROUP SEAT ON IAEA
BOARD OF GOVERNORS: SRI LANKA WILL SUPPORT CONSENSUS

REF: A. STATE 99745
[1](#)B. COLOMBO 0715

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission James R. Moore
for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (S) DCM met on September 22 with MFA Director General for Multilateral Affairs Aruni Wijewardena to convey Ref A points. DCM emphasized that it would be inappropriate for either Iran or Syria to serve on the IAEA Board of Governors due to their lack of cooperation with the IAEA's investigations into their nuclear activities. He urged that Sri Lanka support the bid of fellow SAARC member Afghanistan and reassure the Afghan government of its support for their bid. DCM stressed that whereas Iran and Syria had both served six terms on the IAEA Board of Governors, Afghanistan had served only once, from 1962 to 1964, more than 40 years ago.

[1](#)2. (S) DG Wijewardena expressed support, as she had earlier (Ref A), for the concept of rotating the Middle East and South Asia (MESA) seat within the group. (Note: Wijewardena served as Sri Lanka's Ambassador to Austria from 2005 to [1](#)2008. During her tenure in Vienna, Sri Lanka held the IAEA's MESA seat from 2005 to 2006 and based its claim to the seat on the value of sharing this responsibility among member nations). However, Wijewardena opined that the seat is normally determined by consensus, and predicted that the decision in this case would again be reached on a consensual basis. She said that while Sri Lanka had sympathy for the power-sharing principle and would "keep in mind" U.S. support for Afghanistan and the arguments against Iran and Syria, ultimately Sri Lanka would support the consensus candidate. She added that Colombo would issue instructions to its mission in Vienna only if a vote in the General Conference became necessary. Wijewardena pointed out that if the MESA group does decide on a consensus candidate, it is still possible that a vote on the MESA candidate could be requested in the General Conference. She did not indicate that Sri Lanka itself would call for such a vote.

[1](#)3. (S) Comment: In view of Sri Lanka's increasingly close relationship with Iran and its dependence on Tehran for aid, DCM highlighted the fact that if the MESA seat were to be determined in the General Conference, the balloting would be secret. Although Wijewardena did not indicate how Sri Lanka would vote in that scenario, the point about a secret ballot did appear to register with her.

BLAKE